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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 SANAA 001458

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FBI PASS TO UC RAPLH HORTON AND IOS DEBBIE MANCHAS, CTD/ETIU

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SUBJECT: DNSA TOWNSEND 05/26/04 MEETING WITH ROYG SECURITY OFFICIALS

REF: SANAA 1261

Classified By: Ambassador E.J. Hull for reasons 1.5 (b. and d.)

1. (S) Summary: On 5/26 DNSA Townsend reviewed CT cooperation with MOI al-Alimi, PSO Director al-Gamish and NSB Officer Saleh and highlighted recent inconsistencies in the relationship. Dominating discussion, Alimi affirmed the strength of the CT partnership, and noted that differences of opinion do not diminish its strength. Townsend sought enhanced intelligence sharing and access to CT detainees and trial suspects. Declaring that all requests have been granted, Alimi agreed to look into information provided by Townsend that a Yemen CT detainee may be engaged in attack planning. Townsend pressed the ROYG to facilitate pending extradition and rendition requests and raised concerns over Yemen's controls over small-arms. In reply, Alimi offered access to the weapons storehouse and reviewed Yemen's efforts to halt weapons smuggling. End summary.

2. (S) Deputy National Security Advisor for Combating Terrorism Frances Townsend opened her 5/26 meeting with Minister of Interior Dr. Rashad al-Alimi, Political Security Director GEN Ghalib al-Gamish and National Security Bureau Officer Amar Saleh by saying that at times Yemen has been a "wonderful" partner, but at other times it is inconsistent. She stated that she traveled to Yemen to make cooperation stronger in the areas of intelligence sharing, renditions and arms trafficking. Alimi said from the Yemeni perspective, Yemen and the U.S. are "standing together in this effort to stop terror." Alimi expressed appreciation for Townsend's openness and transparency, but said that the ROYG had a different, more positive view of its cooperation. He added, "different opinions do not detract from the partnership."

Intelligence Sharing; Trial and Evidentiary Access

3. (S/NF) Townsend cited "helpful" instances where USG officials were allowed access to detainees. According to Townsend, these meetings were a direct result of FM Qirbi's February visit to Washington. However, Townsend said, since March the ROYG has allowed no visits to detainees or terrorist trial suspects. (Note: USS Cole suspects Badawi and Quso were re-captured in March.) Alimi responded that all information on ROYG detainees suspected of terrorism is shared with the US and said that USG officials have conducted interviews. Townsend interjected that "not everything" has been shared and said "repeated requests have been denied." Gamish offered that visits were granted, but that poor FBI/CIA coordination led to an unfair impression of cooperation.

4. (S/NF) Townsend pursued the question of FBI access to suspects in the USS Cole trials and combined trials for four terrorist attacks (Ref A). Both Gamish and Alimi maintained that the LEGATT should direct requests to visit trial suspects through the Prosecutor General's office, which controls suspects and evidence. Townsend countered that USG officials should have been able to conduct interviews with the suspects when the Embassy asked, while the suspects were in PSO custody. Townsend added, "this is not a fair way to treat a partner." Gamish replied that the CIA had full access and complained that the USG did not coordinate its requests. Townsend clarified the distinction between law enforcement and intelligence information requests, underscoring that both are necessary. (Note: Now that the trials have begun, USG officials are unable to conduct interviews.)

5. (S/NF) To emphasize the importance of intelligence sharing, Townsend illustrated the case of Mustafa al-Ansari, who was detained and released in Yemen. Ansari later was killed perpetrating the 5/1 Yanbu terrorist attack. Alimi replied that Ansari was detained in 1999 on counterfeiting charges, served a one-year jail sentence and was released. Gamish claimed the Saudis dismissed earlier information-sharing attempts because they believed the persons in question were religious clerics and not criminals. Alimi and Gamish agreed that the Saudis took information more seriously after the May 2003 Riyadh attacks. Townsend offered that information such as fingerprints and

photographic evidence shared with partners could avert future terrorist attacks.

16. (S/NF) Townsend highlighted particular concern over information that a ROYG detainee may be involved in planning a terrorist attack. Townsend said if an attack occurred and was linked to planning in Yemen, "it would be a great tragedy and have terrible consequences for what should be a wonderful relationship." Alimi replied that he did not believe such contact was possible, but he "expected" the U.S. to share information on terrorist threats. Alimi promised to investigate the information provided.

Extraditions/Renditions

17. (S) Describing both national and personal significance to seeing the perpetrators of the USS Cole bombing brought to trial in the U.S., Townsend asked that Alimi "do everything in his power" regarding pending U.S. extradition requests for:

-- USS Cole suspects Jamal Muhammad Ahmad Ali al-Badawi and Fahd Muhammad Ahmad al-Quso;

-- Jaber al-Bannah (Lackawana suspect and American citizen)

Townsend also requested assistance in rendering Abu Atta/al-Sharqawi and Hadi Dulqum to third countries. Alimi responded that extradition in Yemen is governed by its constitution, and that America should understand why a nation must respect its own constitution. (Note: The constitution prohibits extradition of Yemeni citizens.)

Alimi: Access to Weapons Buy-Back Warehouse

18. (S) Turning to small-arms smuggling, Townsend raised concerns over large amounts of Polish and Chinese arms shipments to Yemen's Ministry of Defense. Townsend said if one totaled the past three years of arms shipments, each soldier in Yemen would have 4 or 5 long-guns, not including previously-held MoD stockpiles. Townsend continued that the USG has evidence that weapons traced back to Yemen's MoD were used in the May 2004 attack in Yanbu, Saudi Arabia; and MANPADS from Yemen were used in the 2002 attack in Mombassa, Kenya and the 2003 attack in Saudi Arabia, and the 2003 Hunt helicopter attack in Yemen. Townsend commented that visiting storehouses is not sufficient, and said full accountability of weapons with serial numbers and inventory controls are necessary.

19. (C) Townsend proposed that foreign assistance for Yemen's buy-back program would be easier to obtain if the ROYG could assure donors of ROYG inventory controls and security at storage facilities. Alimi replied that "you may visit the warehouse tomorrow." Alimi detailed recent ROYG actions to limit weapons smuggling, including the closure of the Saada arms-market, promulgation of legislation, and 6 billion Riyals spent in weapons buy-back. (Roughly 33 million USD.)

110. (C) Noting that discussions with Saudi Arabia on arms-smuggling are underway, Alimi offered that Mohammed bin Naif was in Yemen that day to meet with National Security Bureau Officer Saleh to discuss this issue. Alimi said that the ROYG has made repeated requests to Saudi Arabia to return captured Yemeni arms smugglers, but there has been no response. Alimi added that they want Saudi Arabia to take its share of responsibility on this issue.

Zindani

111. (C) Townsend raised Yemen's obligations to freeze the assets of Sheikh Abdul Majid al-Zindani under UNSCR 1267 and said that there is no evidence yet of compliance. Alimi referred her to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Comment

112. (S) Comment: The two hour meeting covered several, if not all, outstanding USG CT requests for cooperation. Alimi and Gamish remained cordial even as difficult points on access to suspects/detainees and improved cooperation were discussed. Embassy Sanaa will follow up on assurances made in the meeting. End comment.
HULL